

# A Brief History of Scoping and Planning the International Year of the Salmon in the North Pacific

By Madeline Young  
IYS Coordinator, North Pacific Region



**Madeline Young** was born and raised in Vancouver, British Columbia, and developed a strong attachment to the ocean while spending childhood summers fishing with her family on the Sunshine Coast. Madeline obtained a BSc in Marine Biology from the University of British Columbia where she studied morphological and molecular techniques to better understand the evolution and taxonomy of coralline algae in the Pacific Northwest. While contemplating her next step, Madeline came across a new Coastal and Marine Management program run by the University Centre of the Westfjords in Ísafjörður, Iceland. Drawn to the idea of a small, international, interdisciplinary program taught in a remote fishing town just below the

Arctic Circle, she moved to Ísafjörður to complete her Master's degree. During this time, she developed an interest in studying ways to reduce entanglements and bycatch in fisheries and aquaculture operations and completed a study of whale, porpoise, and turtle entanglements in mussel aquaculture gear for her thesis. Afterwards, Madeline returned to British Columbia with her new dog, Trítla, and helped to spawn and raise coho salmon and white sturgeon at a land-based hatchery and grow-out facility in Sechelt. Madeline completed an internship at the NPAFC Secretariat in March 2017 and since that time has stayed on with the Secretariat as the North Pacific Coordinator for the International Year of the Salmon.

**I first began working with the NPAFC Secretariat** as an intern in September 2016, where I jumped head first into planning for the International Year of the Salmon (IYS)—a collaborative, international research and outreach initiative to address the many challenges facing ‘Salmon and People in a Changing World’. The IYS is jointly led by the NPAFC and the North Atlantic Salmon Conservation Organization (NASCO) and we are well into the fifth year of scoping and planning for the initiative. The IYS focal year will be 2019, with projects and activities starting in 2018 and continuing into 2022. Since March of this year, I have had the fortune of staying on with the Secretariat as a coordinator for IYS activities in the North Pacific. Over the past few months I have witnessed the IYS continue to take shape into an initiative that has the potential to truly make a difference in an uncertain future—not only to wild salmon but to the human communities that depend on them.

A significant amount of work has gone into getting the IYS to where it is today, much of which is described in NPAFC Technical Report 10 *Story of the International Year of the Salmon: Concept to Launch* (Young et al. 2017). This article contains a summary of Technical Report 10, which itself includes all available NPAFC materials on IYS scoping and planning since the initiative was originally proposed to the NPAFC in 2012 up until the first meeting of the North Pacific Steering Committee, which took place on February 28 and March 1, 2017, in Richmond, BC, Canada.

The idea for a major research initiative centered around the idea of an International Year of the Salmon was first proposed to the NPAFC by Canada's Dr. Richard Beamish in 2012. The IYS was generally intended as a way of alerting the public to the diverse array of issues facing Pacific salmon and provide a framework for an integrated study of the resource, particularly in the winter (R. Beamish, pers. comm.). Keen to explore the idea further, NPAFC formed the IYS Study Group in 2014.



Two IYS scoping meetings were held to seek advice from participants in February 2015 and March 2016, respectively. The priority of the First IYS Scoping Meeting was to develop scientific research themes for the initiative. Conveners of small discussion groups containing subject area experts created a detailed list of research ideas based on panel and round-table discussions reviewing current and emerging national priorities to identify knowledge gaps that could serve as scientific pillars for the IYS. The innovative ideas generated at this meeting were then used to draft the first official IYS proposal that was presented to the Commission at the 2015 NPAFC Annual Meeting. Five broad research themes were outlined in this proposal (IYS-SG 2015 p. 2):

1. Status of Salmon: to understand the present status of salmon and their environment.
2. Salmon in a changing salmosphere: to understand and quantify the effects of natural environmental variability and anthropogenic factors affecting salmon distribution and abundance and to make projections of their future changes.
3. New Frontiers: to develop new technologies and analytical methods to advance salmon science and to explore the uncharted regions of the salmosphere.
4. Human Dimension: to investigate the cultural, social, and economic elements that depend upon sustainable salmon populations.
5. Information Systems: to develop an integrated archive of accessible electronic data collected during the IYS and tools to support future research.

The Commission was extremely impressed with the work of the IYS Study Group in developing IYS science priorities and a formal IYS Working Group was created to continue planning.

Following the 2015 NPAFC Annual Meeting, interest in the IYS outside the North Pacific began to grow as NASCO committed to engage with the NPAFC in the development of its role as a partner in the initiative. NASCO participation in IYS planning and implementation truly gave the IYS an international feel and expanded the scope to include the entire ‘salmosphere’—the current and future range of all salmon species in the northern hemisphere.

Leading up to the Second IYS Scoping Meeting, major components of the IYS had been identified, including its purpose, themes, and duration. What was pressing was development of donor and public outreach strategies, and for partners and their roles to be identified. The Second IYS Scoping Meeting included IYS Working Group members and potential partners invited to provide input into the scoping and development of the IYS strategy and business model. The main topics under consideration were potential governance arrangements to support ongoing IYS coordination and implementation, further development of prospective research themes, public engagement and outreach strategies, organizational capacity and support, funding strategies, and business plan development.

Based on discussions from the Second Scoping Meeting, the IYS Working Group developed a joint proposal with NASCO to assist both organizations in deciding how to best move forward with the IYS (IYS-WG 2016). Three levels of governance were suggested: the salmosphere level (IYS Coordinating Committee), the regional/RFMO level (IYS regional steering committees), and the party/jurisdiction specific level (individual Parties/jurisdictions, NGOs, and core partners). It was anticipated that most of the IYS activities would occur at the regional/RFMO and Party/jurisdictional levels and coordination over a wide range of objectives would be required between all levels of governance. The new proposal was accepted by both NPAFC and NASCO at the annual meetings of both organizations in May and June 2016, respectively, officially launching IYS planning into full force.

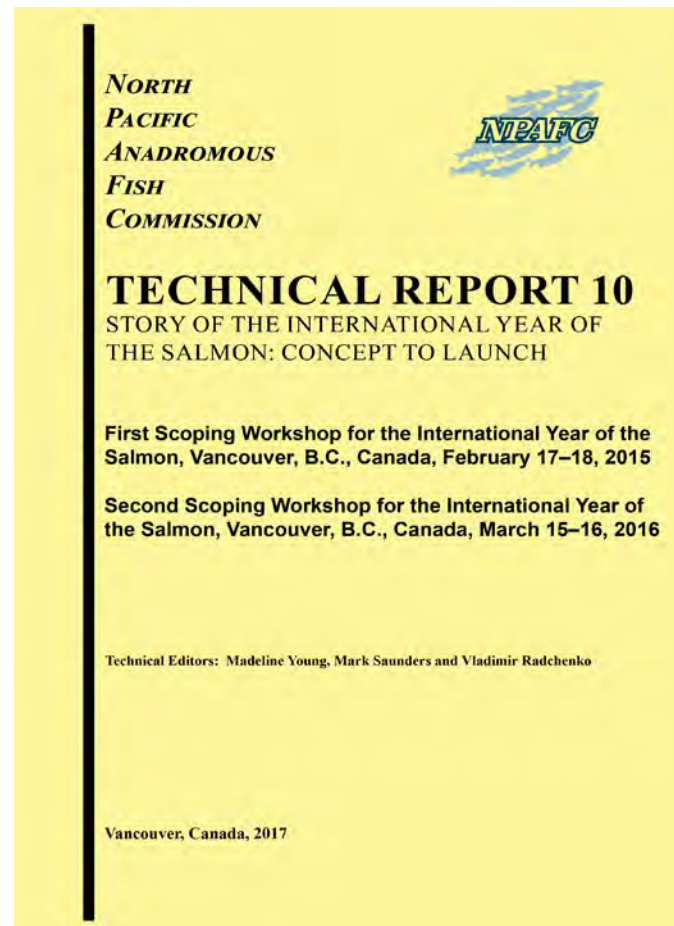


*Participants of the First IYS Scoping Meeting in Vancouver, BC, Canada, February 17–18, 2015. Photo credit: PSC Secretariat*

An IYS Coordinating Committee composed of six members from NPAFC and NASCO was formed in September 2016, with its top priorities to develop a document outlining IYS governance, design an IYS brand and website, and begin planning the 2018 IYS Symposium. The IYS North Pacific narrative of Technical Report 10 ends with initial considerations of the IYS governance structure and formation of the IYS Coordinating Committee and leads into the first meeting of the North Pacific Steering Committee, which took place on February 28 and March 1, 2017, in Richmond, BC, Canada. Next steps following the meeting included detailed planning of IYS outreach and research themes, completion of a results-based planning framework to guide planning, research, and outreach activities at the local, regional, basin and hemispheric scales, and development of an IYS funding strategy.

The IYS continues to evolve as more and more people with unique and thought-provoking ideas from across the hemisphere are brought in on the planning discussion. This scale of collaboration, in my opinion, is what makes the IYS unique among other salmon-related initiatives. Similar threats from environmental and human-caused pressures are faced by wild salmon populations across the northern hemisphere and declining trends in abundance are becoming commonplace. The ability to address these challenges in a timely manner requires effective collaboration at all spatial scales. I am beyond excited to be involved in this inspirational initiative and am eager to see how the year unfolds. Stay tuned!

For an update on more recent IYS news and developments, please visit Mark Saunders' article on page 23.



Participants of the Second IYS Scoping Meeting in Vancouver, BC, Canada, March 15-16, 2016. Photo credit: NPAFC Secretariat

## References

- International Year of the Salmon Study Group (IYS-SG). 2015. Proposal of the CSRS Study Group on International Year of the Salmon (IYS) 17 pp. International Year of the Salmon Study Group, Committee on Scientific Research and Statistics. (Available at <http://www.npafc.org>).
- International Year of the Salmon Working Group (IYS-WG). 2016. Outline proposal for an International Year of the Salmon (IYS) 'Salmon and People in a Changing World'. NPAFC Doc. 1663. 9 pp. International Year of the Salmon Working Group, Committee on Scientific Research and Statistics. (Available at <http://www.npafc.org>).
- Young, M., M. Saunders, and V. Radchenko. 2017. TECHNICAL REPORT 10 *Story of the International Year of the Salmon: Concept to Launch*. 147 pp. NPAFC Secretariat. (Available at <http://www.npafc.org>).